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ABSTRACT

This paper introduces a method of storying called concentric storying, describing its development as a vehicle for both personal growth and professional development in preservice teacher education. Concentric storying is the process of deconstructing personal stories to reveal the core values and beliefs and acting as a catalyst for the reconstruction of a new story governed by new beliefs and values. Concentric storying is a collaborative process whereby the reflections on story are made within a group. It offers a unique alternative model for professional development that can benefit teacher educators, action researchers, preservice students, and graduate education students. While concentric storying has proven to be a powerful vehicle for most students, there are some students who cannot make any connections across their stories. This tends to be linked to acceptance of story as a legitimate learning tool and the skill level of the group members to be both reflective and collaborative. Concentric storying has value as a classroom tool, and students tend to respond positively to the process. (Contains 41 references.) (SM)

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Concentric storying:
A vehicle for professional development in teacher education.

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The use of story has become quite popular in educational circles and is increasingly being recognized as a vehicle for professional development. Some use fictional stories as a way for educators to connect their own professional experiences in a new way. For example: Manley - Casimir and Wasserman (1989) experimented with stories told through a movie to facilitate decision making; Winter (1991) utilized fictionalized story to promote changes in an organization; Evans shared a fictional story (based on her reality) with practicing teachers in an action research strategy designed to move them forward in their professional development. All these efforts used the power of story to facilitate new connections leading to changed practice.

Stories from the real life context are also important to professional development. Student teachers shared stories of well remembered events to reveal event-structured knowledge (Carter, 1993). Over time this story sharing allowed student teachers to shift their understandings of their professional world and reframe pedagogical beliefs and values. Others such as Clandinin and Connelly (1995), and Witherell and Noddings (1991) have worked with factual stories collaboratively for the purpose of reflection and professional reconstruction.

We are two professors in a faculty of education with responsibilities for teaching preservice and graduate classes and for conducting research in education. In this paper we will introduce a method of storying that we call "Concentric Storying" and describe how we have developed it as a vehicle for both personal growth and professional development. We believe that other educators and researchers may find our experiences helpful if they choose to explore stories in their own context.

Our understanding of the nature of story

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Human beings are storytelling animals who make sense of their world through storying their individual and cultural stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Gudmunsdottir, 1991b). Traditionally the storyform was learned at an early age through the universal stories of childhood; fairy tales, myths, folk tales. Here we learned that stories had a beginning, middle and end; as well, they had characters, conflict, conflict resolution, mood and theme.

Each of us has a dominant story that influences how we interpret the events that happen to us and how we connect them to each other. The dominant story is often a survival story; a story created in childhood that reflected how we learned what we had to do or not do to survive and be loved. Influenced by our dominant narrative, certain events are prominent in our stories, while others are forgotten. Core values are also expressed in the stories (Tappan & Brown, 1989). For example, a value such as whether or not we basically trust others will be embedded in our stories.

We act upon the key elements implicit in the stories we tell. This performance is constitutive - the telling and the doing actually shape our lives and our relationships (E. Bruner, 1986).

Our personal stories are set within a cultural story. From a postmodernist perspective there is a metanarrative or grand narrative that reflects our culture and acts as a filter on our ways of thinking and being. Grounded in the scientific method and patriarchal values, this narrative has discounted the stories of people who were not white male European Christians. Giving credence to the metanarrative, there is only one way to be in this world, one set of values/rules to live according to, one self who is the storyteller.

In the postmodern age, this metanarrative is being challenged. It is recognized that everyone has a valuable story to tell and that there are many ways to know and be. Those who have been traditionally marginalized, such as women, are claiming their own voice. As well, there is no longer considered to be only one self, but there are many possible selves who will tell the story differently in different contexts. And most importantly, humans have the agency to reconstruct their stories.

Concentric Storying

Concentric storying is the process of deconstructing personal stories to reveal the core values and beliefs and acting as a catalyst for the reconstruction of a "new story" governed by new beliefs and values. Through the deconstruction of more than one personal story, the interpretive lens of the storyteller emerges. A step by step process for this strategy will be offered later in this paper.

We are not the sole authors of our stories as they interconnect with the stories of other; narratives are socially constructed (McLoed, 1997). Thus the interpretive filter is colored by personal experiences and tribal assumptions - the early socialization of the family unit. The personal story is set in turn within a cultural story. The cultural story promotes the values and beliefs that are held by a culture; for example, autonomy and materialism are North American values that dominate many North American personal stories.

The essential elements of our dominant stories can be identified as the "old story". The old story is one that still drives our actions - often at an implicit level. However, given an opportunity to identify and reflect on the old story, we are in a position to reconstruct and create a "new story". The new story offers us a way to think about being in the world and can act as a new central story to guide us.

The possibility for transformation is implicit in the nature of narrative. Stories have intentionality (J. Bruner, 1986). It is this primary characteristic of story that allows people to plot out the course of their lives rather than simply react to others (Parry & Doan, 1994). However, new stories can't be actualized without performances that match the intent of the story. "With every performance, persons are reauthoring their lives" (White & Epston, 1990, p. 13). There must be new ways of behaving that, according to White and Epston, must be observed by an audience.

Concentric storying is a collaborative process whereby the reflections on story are made within a group. The collaboration serves several purposes. Trust and support within the group are prerequisites. Given these characteristics, group members can act as the necessary audience as each person actualizes new behaviors to match the intent of the new stories. Another key purpose for collaborative reflection is the ability of other people to hear stories with "fresh ears" and thus to be able to identify the central elements of the old stories; the group members are often better able to know when a new story is truly new or simply and old story with a new twist.

Archetypal data analysis

Recently that stories have been used extensively as research tools and have quickly gained respectability (Huberman, 1995). This has led us to wonder if Concentric Storying has the potential to be adapted as a useful data analysis tool. It seems particularly well suited to qualitative data analysis where the data consists, at least in part, of taped and transcribed dialogues or open-ended interviews.

When Anne conducted a phenomenological study of the world of teachers who taught mythology, she used Concentric Storying as part of her data analysis (Elliott,

1993). Recognizing that knowledge -- in this case knowledge about teaching mythology--is socially constructed and has personal historic roots and values embedded within it. She believed that Concentric Storying might provide additional insight into the worlds of the three participants. Specifically, she interviewed three teachers of mythology for about six hours each over at least two interview periods. Interviews were audio-taped, and transcribed. As a part of data analysis, she identified all the coherent stories embedded in the dialogue, isolated them and applied the Concentric Storying analysis process that she had used in class. She identified each story's characters, setting, conflict, resolution and theme and gave each story a title. In this sense the data were analyzed through an archetypal process since all stories share the same basic elements. She then compared these elements across all the stories told by a single individual. Working closely with each of the three teachers in negotiating meaning, she found that each of them told the same kind of story throughout their interview data. These stories revealed much about their deep beliefs and values related to the role of mythology in the classroom. The participants in this study individually expressed the same kind of surprise and recognition as had her students. This process of negotiation of meaning became highly charged and exciting partly because of it hermeneutic nature.

Except in its most basic form, phenomenological inquiry cannot be sharply distinguished from hermeneutics because making conscious the perceptions a person holds leads inevitably into considerations about what those perceptions really mean (Willis, 1991). Hermeneutics, therefore, generally refers to this mediation of meaning after the experience has been encountered and described. The real task at this point of analysis is to make an interpretation of the data where the negotiated meaning is faithful to the participant's intention. It is essential not to change meaning without the participant's consent (Van Manen, 1990). The art of the researcher is to keep the question of the meaning of the phenomena open and to keep the researcher and the participant oriented towards the substance of the inquiry topic. Thus, throughout the interview, reflection is on-going and can reach a deeper interpretive level by virtue of being discussed with a thoughtful reflective other. Layers of meaning that are often initially implicit, exist beneath each explicit experience. Before these layers are accessible, the experience must first be encountered by the participant and then described. It is at the interpretive level that the implicit layers are often made explicit. Thus, it seems that the hermeneutic process occurs at the interpretation stage when the interpretation goes through negotiated meaning beneath the surface structure and encounters deeper levels of meaning. It is at this point that Concentric Storying appears able to make a major contribution. It can contribute to an understanding of the embedded

assumptions, values and beliefs of the person who is central to the phenomenon being explored.In concentric storying, the stories are analyzed using an archetypal data analysis. The data analysis was initially derived from Campbell's (1949, 1988, 1990) notion of the monomyth. We can look at our lives as stories and we are all heroes of our own stories. Yet Campbell pointed out that all stories follow an archetypal pattern. Not only is there a beginning, middle and end but the hero goes through an initiation, followed by a great struggle and an ultimate confrontation with a demon or dragon. Eventually there is a reward of some kind for the hero.

Similarly, we have found that humans tend to tell the same type of story over time. Perhaps, for example, the storyteller is always the victim. Or the aggressive conqueror. Or always superior to everyone in the story. Thus we have discovered that if we analyze the archetypal story parts, the lens or implicit filter of the storyteller emerges (Drake, Elliott, Castle, 1993).

Story parts that we have focused on are:

- Title: Are there similarities?
- Type of character: Are they the same type of people? family? work related?
- Conflict: Is the conflict similar each time? intimacy issues? power issues?
- Resolution of conflict: Has the hero resolved the problem the same way?
- Mood: Is the mood consistently gloomy? upbeat?
- Theme: Does the same theme pervade the stories?

A Story Model for Professional Development

One of the things that educators have come to accept as reality is that change is difficult. Dealing with change is a large part of professional development. As educators are required to implement new policies, there often needs to be a shift in beliefs and/or certainly a new way of doing things. This brings a sense of loss and anxiety along with other emotions and contributes to the tendency to resist change of any sort (Fullan, 1993).

What has to happen for people to actually implement and maintain the change? Professional development is a part of the puzzle. Effective professional development must be personalized suggests Marczely (1996). We need strategies that affect both the heart and minds of individuals since change begins with our own beliefs and practices and then radiates outward to affect the structures and cultures within which we work (Sparks, 1998). The traditional professional development model emphasize one shot sessions with an expert who delivers his or her material and leaves without in-class modeling, teacher practice or feedback. Little change occurs. More authentic models

emphasize small groups who work together over a period of time and where actual changes in practice occur (Boudah & Mitchell, 1998).

Mohr (1998) recommends storytelling as a useful tool for professional development. According to her, using stories as the basis for bringing out issues and making meaningful connections is basic to learning, while the oral sharing of stories builds community. Personal narratives are powerful tools for learning to teach (Carter & Doyle, 1996). Writing and telling stories is the central vehicle of concentric storying and effectively brings out issues while building community.

Newer understandings of how people learn stress that professional learning can come in many forms (see, for example, Richardson, 1996, Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Four inter-related forms of learning are particularly significant to initial and ongoing learning: collaboration, reflection, integration and experience (Thiessen, 1998). Collaboration and reflection are core elements of concentric storying. Integration refers to establishing connections with practice; in concentric storying this integration depends upon selecting stories that involve the real life experiences in educational settings. Finally, experience involves applying new learning to the workplace. For concentric storying to be a complete process, we need to revise our old stories to include new behavior and new learnings. It is only in the action that a new story is created.

In short, Concentric Storying offers a unique alternative model for professional development that fulfils all the criteria mentioned above.

Professional learning contexts

For teacher educators

We and a colleague set out to explore the implicit assumptions we each brought to the research site (Drake, Elliott & Castle, 1993). The research design involved telling each other our stories about previous research experiences. Stories were written, told, audio-taped, reflected upon by all three of us, discussed and rewritten. At its core, the process was a collaborative reflective one with meaning negotiated among all participants.

The data analysis was influenced by our previous work with mythology and the journey of the hero/heroine (Drake, 1991; Drake, 1992; Elliott & Crux, 1992; Elliott, 1995) as well as, by Susan's work with school superintendents (Drake, 1992) . We, therefore, wondered what would happen if we analyzed the series of research stories each told by comparing the core story parts. Were the plots, conflicts and resolutions similar? Who were the characters? Was the theme repeated? This technique, similar to traditional coding and categorization found in much qualitative

research analysis, gave us a simple, yet powerful, strategy to identify common patterns and themes.

The three of us were surprised by the intensity of our collaborative reflection during data analysis. We constructed our own stories, deconstructed each other's stories according to core story parts, confronted the implicit beliefs we found embedded in them, and reconstructed the stories.

We discovered that each of us were ruled by negative perceptions about our own abilities to do rigorous research. We had thought that this was just our own personal inadequacy, however, we found that a common story was threaded throughout our individual stories. The common story revealed our socialization as women as a significant filter to our self-perceptions as researchers. Women were allowed to be good teachers and good friends BUT they were not supposed to be good researchers. We assumed that this was the domain of our male colleagues.

This old story emerged through our deconstruction of a number of personal stories about research. At this point we were able to see how this common story had dominated our sense of self and had affected our actions as educational researchers. We were also able to begin to reconstruct a new story. Our sense of inadequacy had little to do with our inherent abilities, rather it was simply an implicit belief embedded in our stories.

Over time, our new stories of ourselves as effective researchers became a lived reality. No longer do we defer to the men on our faculty, nor do we believe that they, by virtue of being male, are better researchers. Given this experience and our new story, we have made profound changes. As well, we have just completed a year long study on creating a new personal mythology which allowed us to revisit the same territory and further cement our new stories as researchers (Pachecho, Drake, Elliott, & Morbey, 1999).

For action researchers

Evans (1998) describes a very similar process in her work with teachers in action research groups. As a deputy headmistress in a large comprehensive school for students 12 to 18, she was responsible for ongoing professional development. Determined to set up opportunities for teachers to take time to reflect upon and improve pedagogical practice, she set up action research groups. Teachers wrote 'fictional stories' using well remembered events to start the process. Through group discussions, teachers gained a firm understanding of the values that they brought to their individual action research studies. These individual projects revolved around how one could improve the process of education at their school. Story writing continued throughout the action research cycle

and was an integral part of the methodology that included the more traditional diary writing, video or audio recording.

Extrapolating from this, Evans developed a model for using story in action research. It involved four quadrants that moved from more fictional stories, to more factual stories, to personal renewal to professional reconstruction. There were no purely fictional stories but later stories tended to be more fact based than others. Starting with loosely fictional stories allowed for distance from potentially embarrassing situations and enabled more authentic discussion. Personal renewal meant that the author of the stories had increased personal understanding and excitement about his or her learning. Professional reconstruction referred to empowerment of the teachers with whom the story was shared. They became more reflective, developed their own practices and took a more proactive role in the school.

Evans notes several things that have significance and offer important parallels to concentric storying. First, the story writing throughout the process was aligned with action research principles. Second, fears that participants would only be interested in their own stories were unfounded. In Bateson's (1989) words, teachers gained from comparing notes and trying to understand the choices of friends. Third, writing had the power to transform the writer and his or her understandings. The sharing of writing with others facilitated ongoing meaning making and the development of an ongoing dialogic community.

For preservice students

As a preservice instructor, Anne believes that she needs to provide a forum for student teachers to confront the beliefs that they have developed over their many years as students. She reminds them that they are the products of the existing educational system having learned to "play the game" with a flair for success. These future teachers tend to be mark and task-oriented, as well as, generally extremely competitive. In other words, they are successful and exemplary products of a system that has emphasized these values. She suggests to them that unless they examine and explicitly determine their own beliefs and values about teaching, they are likely to teach as they themselves were taught. While in some cases such replication may be appropriate, she challenges them to explicitly "know why" they are choosing a particular pedagogical approach.

At the beginning of the year, therefore, Anne discusses both the value of telling stories and how stories are traditionally used to share knowledge about teaching (Gudmunsdottir, 1991a). The next step in this explicit instruction is a modeling one, which Anne believes is central to student understanding of new processes (Woloshyn &

Elliott, in press). Therefore, she models by sharing some of her personal teaching stories, as well as, stories written by other teachers. As they listen to the stories, she asks the student teachers to identify the beliefs the storytellers hold about education by "listening between the lines". Students are asked to listen to the choice of words and to identify the metaphors that are repeated across stories as well as the plot and theme. Throughout this period, she is consciously creating a safe environment by emphasizing that all stories need to be treated confidentially. As she takes the first step in trusting and being vulnerable, the students generally respond by respecting the confidentiality request. She, then, shares the Concentric Storying model with them and asks them to deconstruct stories using the generic story parts to help them be insightful while reading between the lines.

Finally, student teachers are asked to select two stories from their own experiences either as students or as teachers. They are told to be prepared to tell these stories orally to two of their peers. They usually wonder how they can choose only two stories from the myriad they possess, but Anne assures them that they can trust themselves to select what is important to them. They are given a period of a few days to reflect upon their two stories before they are shared. The following eight step process is then followed.

1. Self-selected triads are formed in class.
2. The first storyteller tells two stories consecutively without any interruptions.
3. While the stories are being told, the listeners deconstruct each story into its basic story elements of characters, setting, conflict, resolution and theme using a prepared sheet. (See Attachment)
4. After oral recounting, a dialogue begins with the listeners giving feedback about what they heard "between the lines" of the story. At this stage clarification and discussion occur in the group. This discussion moves beyond the story details to overall beliefs and values that have produced the conflict, resolution and theme. Finally, each participant gives the prepared sheets to the story-teller.
5. This procedure is repeated for each person in the triad.
6. The next stage is a reflective one. The story teller has several pieces of data upon which to reflect including the experience of the telling, the oral discussion of the story and the written response sheets from the two listeners. Students are then asked to think about what they have learned about themselves from the experience.

7. They, then, write about what they have learned and hand it to the instructor. When writing, students are asked to think about the following kinds of questions. Were any patterns evident across your stories? Are you surprised by what your listeners hear? The actual stories are not included.

8. Finally, the instructor reads each reflection and responds to the patterns that are revealed. The intent is to help students extend their thinking by providing another perspective on what they have learned as a result of the process.

The first storytelling session, thus, provides students with an understanding of "the ground on which they are standing," as they enter the beginning stages of the teaching profession. The whole process is repeated after each of four experiences teaching in the schools. On these occasions students have relatively little difficulty selecting stories as the experiences are so immediate. For instance, Donna found that all her stories expressed the importance of preserving and building the self-esteem of her students. She described trying to avoid reprimanding students in front of the class and about believing in giving a second chance to misbehaving students. She was horrified when one story actually showed that she had denied a student a second chance "to show me he could behave responsibly". As a result of this process, she ruefully explained, "I learned an important lesson about my beliefs and my practice: one does not always reflect the other." The Concentric Storying process allowed her to see the discrepancy and move to change it if she wished.

The student teachers watch their beliefs and values form, shift and change over the course the year. They have identified that this collaborative reflective component is a vital part of their year's experiences. For instance, at the conclusion of the process, Allison wrote,

> I see strong similarities among my stories. They all involved potentially negative experiences that ended extremely positively. It is also evident to me that I take a special interest in those who are "different" from the others or those who do not fit the "norm".

Kelly responded to the process in writing by saying,

> The two teaching stories focus around two main ideas: 1) patience and understanding is needed when dealing with a class that most teachers find rebellious and difficult to manage and 2) children enter school with a whole background of home experiences and problems that are sometimes difficult to deal with in the school setting.

For Graduate Education Students

Susan takes a slightly different approach to storytelling in her graduate course in which other professions, as well as teaching, are represented. She asks students to tell their life stories and uses the Concentric Storying process to help them identify the purpose and meaning in their lives. She believes that the process can empower them to make new choices about how they will retell and live these stories. Implicit in this process is our belief that teaching is an on going process of professional development that cannot be isolated from the personal.

To begin, students are asked to think of two major changes that have happened to them and to think of these changes as stories in the book of life. In reality, stories can revolve around any topic, but since everyone has experienced major change, this topic guarantees everyone will readily have a story. If a greater number of stories are told, the analysis can be more extensive. The minimum of two, however, usually fits the available time. Students also need to be prepared to share these stories with two other students which often helps to determine which stories are selected.

Individuals reflect on their life stories as having a beginning, middle and end and as having characters, setting, conflict, resolution and a theme. Stories are then mapped onto a spiral map and are then connected to the cycle of life. These maps can be created with words or pictures. The maps offer anchor points to recall the initial interpretation of the story so that the individual can return and retell the story. The stories should be given titles.

The next step is to work in triads. One person becomes the storyteller and tells his or her stores. The other two listen carefully and write their analysis on the prepared sheet which is a short description of the characters, setting, conflict, resolution and theme for each story. (See Attachment). Discussion then follows with all three people focusing on the commonalties within the stories and the underlying assumptions and beliefs that are revealed.

Often titles alone offer a clue as to the basic direction of the story. Suzanne's stories, for example, were both called "Leaving Home". One happened in her late teens when she moved from home to college. Her next story happened more than a decade later when a young uncle died suddenly and she realized the mortality of her parents. At the same time, she decided to stay in her newly established career for away from her parents. In each story, she was leaving the comfort of home at very different levels of consciousness; the first was a physical separation and the second was a psychological one. Through storying these events she realized what was actually happening for her; her guilt alleviated, she was able to celebrate her decision not to return home.

The conflicts in many of the stories revolve around issues of control. Nancy told two stories where she took responsibility for being "perfect" as a wife of two growing boys and later as an educational consultant. She was serious about everything and had no lightness in her life. The listeners pointed out the need for control that dictated her action in both stories. This rang true for Nancy who is now reframing her stories to allow for playfulness and freedom from the need to control everything. For Marsha, the control issue dominated her stories in the opposite way. She moved from being out of control to gaining control in a story as a child who moved around from place to pace with an army-based father and later as an unwed mother. Through participating in the Concentric Storying process, she was able to recognize the positive elements in each story; this allowed her to reframe her experiences. Reframing helps her to remember to look beyond the immediate crisis to see a bigger picture when she finds herself feeling out of control. This gives her a sense of control that she did not have before.

Individuals are often surprised when their stories are more than they seem. Carol is a good example of this.

> I thought when I started writing that the theme I had chosen to write about was changing circumstances and the way I dealt with them. One was about going away to university and how that brought about positive changes in my personality. The other was about my first year as a teacher bringing negative changes to my personality. ... However, I realized what the stories were really about was how I let other people's perceptions of me, or what I think are other people's perceptions, influence my behavior and how I present myself.

Carol reflected with her triad on how to transcend the negative effects of this pattern. She finished by saying,

> In all our stories there seemed to be similar patters (for individuals). Even though we were aware of how our stories had influenced our thinking and our lives, we were still playing out old patterns. I know a leopard supposedly cannot change its spots, but you would think that a thinking and reflecting leopard could at least rearrange them a little. Concentric Storying facilitates people reflecting and, at least, "Changing the spots a little."

Collaborative reflections on the process

When we use Concentric Storying with students in either our preservice or graduate education courses, our goal is the same; to help them identify and examine their basic beliefs and values explicitly. Often we identify a topic for exploration to help them

focus their selection of stories. We have found that our choice of topic is not very significant as the same core beliefs and values appear to emerge regardless of the inquiry topic. For instance, in preservice courses the inquiry topic is generally grounded in the classroom. Such topics as classroom management or student evaluation are used. In less homogeneous graduate education classes, we may ask for stories about a time when they were very motivated or when they successfully motivated others.

As we regularly shared our experiences with Concentric Storying, we found that the same things were happening in both our classes, although we were applying the process in slightly different ways. Neither of us told our students in advance that their stories might be the same. Rather we trusted the process to unfold. Repeatedly, however, we found that, although participants were to tell only two stories, there were remarkable similarities within the stories that often startled the teller and the listeners. Invariably, though, it was the insights of the listeners that led to the real surprises. For example, all of us noticed that issues of power and control were often central to the conflict in stories.

We were pleased that repeatedly students reported that they were being empowered to reflect upon the kinds of personal and professional changes they would like to make in their lives and practice. This outcome was not completely surprising to us, however, as we remembered our own reaction to the insights gleaned from looking at ourselves as researchers. We saw our students, like ourselves, experience dissonance and begin to make new choices to facilitate breaking free of old patterns. Such decisions, although personal, appeared to have the potential to be transformative.

We have repeatedly found that our adult students seem relieved to find the space in their harried lives to reflect upon central issues. We agree that we provide a forum for identifying the ways in which personal and professional lives coincide and for identifying central patterns that may be impeding them in both spheres. We have concluded that Concentric Storying when used in a class, enables individuals to separate from their lived experiences and reflect on why they create and tell their stories as they do.

Yet Concentric Storying is not without drawbacks. It is dependent on developing a self-managing collaborative learning group. The concept of critical friend has been useful in such groups in professional development situations (Bennett et al, 1997). That is, the critical friend is not the devil's advocate approaching the other with attempts at falsification. Rather the critical friend offers positive support. Groups by their very nature differ. Some are more reflective than others. Some are not as supportive as could be hoped for.

We note that while Concentric Storying has proved to be a powerful vehicle for most of our students there are still some students who cannot make any connections across their stories. In our observations, this has been linked to acceptance of story as a legitimate learning tool and the skill level of the group members to be both reflective and collaborative. At this juncture of working with concentric story, we have observed that women are more likely to embrace story as a way of knowing and are eager to work in a collaborative reflective group. Thus we are reflecting upon how we can change our teaching strategies to encourage all students to participate more fully.

In conclusion, we have used Concentric Storying enough times to feel certain of its value as a classroom tool and to observe the way our students respond positively to the impact the process has had upon them. Over time, it has not lost its ability to surprise and energize both ourselves and our participants. Without question the most difficult part of this process is putting the new story into action. It is easiest to slip back into old story behavior. Yet with the support of our critical friends we have found that deep change is truly possible.

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